

Lift off to Local eGovernment: New Citadel Statement Aims to Tell National and EU Decision Makers what Local Government Really Needs

The Flemish Government and a host of European local government partner organisations are working to ensure that the Belgian Presidency's forthcoming 'Lift Off Towards Open Government' Conference on December 15-16th starts with a bang by identifying the top things that national and EU decision makers can do by 2013 to better support local eGovernment. The aim of this effort is to produce a pan-European 'Call to Action' - known as **The Citadel Statement** – that will help local government deliver on the key objectives of the Malmo Ministerial Declaration.

The Malmo Declaration, signed by EU Ministers on the 18 November 2009 in Malmö, Sweden, outlines a forward-looking eGovernment vision to be achieved by 2015

http://www.se2009.eu/polopoly_fs/1.24306!menu/standard/file/Ministerial%20Declaration%20on%20eGovernment.pdf. The key 'Malmo' objectives that EU

Member States have pledged to achieve in the next five years are:

- To empower businesses and citizens through 1) eGovernment services designed around users' needs, 2) better access to information and 3) active citizen involvement in the policy making process;
- To facilitate mobility in the single market by providing seamless eGovernment services for setting up business, studying, working, residing and retiring in Europe;
- To enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of government services by reducing the administrative burden, improving the organisational processes of administrations and using ICT to improve energy efficiency in public administrations.

Initial research shows that despite numerous policy documents and ‘how to’ manuals on local eGovernment, nearly one year on the ‘Malmö Vision’ is still not being translated down to the on-the-ground, local level. The **Citadel Statement** aims to address this short-coming by better understanding why local communities are finding it challenging to implement eGovernment in an innovative, cost-effective and efficient manner. Toward that end, supporters of the **Citadel Statement** have launched an open online consultation to encourage local eGovernment practitioners across Europe to help identify practical solutions to combat working barriers at the local level such as bureaucratic red tape, cultural resistance and divergent privacy and data protection laws.

To create the basis for the online consultation, the Flemish eGovernment Authority joined forces with SOCITM – the UK society for ICT and related professionals in the public and third sectors – to host a one day workshop at the recent SOCITM conference in Brighton. The workshop, which included the InterReg IVb project Smart Cities, gathered experts from across Europe to identify top actions that local governments need from National and EU decision-makers in order to better implement eGovernment.

Participants at the workshop agreed that to make ‘Malmö’ real at the local level, EU and National decision makers should take the following actions:

- 1) Help make public data more open across Europe by identifying five key areas where data can be reasonably be expected to be shared by 2013
- 2) Facilitate interoperability for e-government services by agreeing a common semantic library for key terms by 2013
- 3) Support local government e-service delivery by encouraging national and regional governments to be responsible for infrastructure issues such as cloud computing standards
- 4) Make seamless e-government more achievable through the identification of five practical eServices that all local governments need to deliver by 2013

5) Facilitate mobility by developing shared standards for the identification of people across Europe by 2013

6) Reduce the administrative burden by 'optimising' EU and National procurement rules to better facilitate the 'build once, share many times' principle

Supporters of the **Citadel Statement** now invite people from across Europe to comment on these proposed actions as well as to suggest additional ones at: <https://egovernmentstatement.uservoice.com>. In addition to contributing to the statement, organisations are invited to visually show their support by emailing their logo to info@21cconsultancy.com. Logos will be posted on a special website devoted to the **Citadel Statement**.

The forthcoming declaration has been named the 'Citadel Statement' for two strategic reasons:

1. The word citadel is originally derived from the phrase 'citta ideale' or 'ideal city' and stands for a fortress that is used to protect a city.
2. The launch event for the declaration will be in the Ghent Citadel Park on the site of a former fortress built at the beginning of the 19th century.

The online consultation will be open until November 5. Outcomes will be used to shape the formal **Citadel Statement** which will be launched on December 14 at a pre-conference to 'Lift-off Towards Open Government' that is co-hosted by the Flemish Government and Smart Cities. Supporters of the **Citadel Statement** hope that the Call-to-Action becomes a 'living document' that continues to evolve in the run-up to 2015 in a manner that spurs local government to achieve better eServices for citizens.

The Flemish Government invite practitioners from across Europe to the site of the old Ghent Citadel on December 14 - the perfect place to launch an 'Ideal Cities Statement' www.opengov2010.be.